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Hill · Life and character of Rev. Aaron Bancroft.
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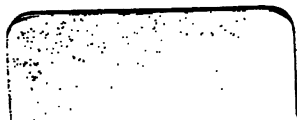


FROM THE
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Gift of the
**New England
Historic Genealogical Society**

November 26, 1917



A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF THE
REV. AARON BANCROFT, D. D.
SENIOR PASTOR
OF THE
SECOND CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY
IN WORCESTER,
DELIVERED AT HIS INTERMENT,
AUGUST 22, 1839.

BY ALONZO HILL,
Pastor of the Second Congregational Society in Worcester.

WORCESTER:
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✓
Nov 26, 1917

Received from the
Lyon Endowment Fund in Geological Society

TO
MY PARISHIONERS,

THIS HUMBLE TRIBUTE

TO THE

MEMORY OF OUR VENERATED SENIOR PASTOR,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

DISCOURSE.

2 TIMOTHY, iv. 7, 8.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith :
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord,
the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.

UNDER the most ordinary circumstances, it is impossible to contemplate the termination of human life, but with the interest of a personal relation. It is the end of so much that is known, and the beginning of so much that is unknown, that it is not easy to witness, much less to approach it, without a solemn pause in the current of the thoughts ; for how much is crowded into this brief hurrying period, and what scenes await us at its close !—Then cometh the end. The account on earth is terminated. No more temptations, no more trials, no more conflicts. The battle is fought, and the victory is lost or won ; the race is run, and the prize is missed or gained. The past cannot return, nor its decisions be reversed. The page in its history is written, and the page in God's book of life. And to him who sat and talked with us but yesterday with all the familiarity of friendship, the veil which hides the future is raised, the dark mysteries of the unseen

world are revealed,—faith has ripened into reality,—and hope into fruition. If, then, we were met to pay the last offices of respect to the remains of an ordinary individual,—in the lofty speculations and solemn reflections of the hour—in contemplating the loss of a single mind on the social condition—in following that mind in its lonely path through the dark valley, where all must travel, to its final home—there would be room for the most interesting and awakening thought.

✓ But the presence of this numerous assembly—the drapery of mourning hung around this church—the weeds of woe in which so many are clad—the grief pictured on so many countenances—are indications that no ordinary man lies before us ; that he, whom the shroud now covers, was largely endowed by the Creative Spirit ; has acted a conspicuous part on the theatre of life ; and in acting that part, has maintained his integrity, and kept the faith ; that he was endeared to many hearts, and has left memorials behind him which will not soon perish. May we not then pause a few moments, before we deposit these remains in the tomb, to contemplate the long and useful life that is just now closed, to gather up the fading images of departed worth, and, before they have quite vanished, to impress them upon our hearts ?

The Rev. Dr. BANCROFT is principally known abroad, and will be known to posterity, as among the distinguished advocates of religious freedom in New England. Mayhew, and Chauncy, and Gay * led the way in vindicating the rights of the human mind—and he, above all others, with his cotemporaries, James Freeman, and

* See Note A.

Noah Worcester, now gone to their rest, entered on their labors, and carried on the great work which they had begun. He was remarkable, beyond any man whom I have known, for his deep-seated abhorrence of every thing like mental slavery, and was jealous with a godly jealousy of every thing that might interfere with the mind's entire freedom. He believed that Christianity was intended to emancipate the soul, not only from error and sin, but from prejudice, from narrowness, from the fear of man; and to impart to it liberty to act, to choose, and to follow its convictions, wherever they might lead. And he entered upon the stage of life at a time when the great contest for civil freedom was going on—but when he thought that religious liberty was endangered. It is true the period had gone by when the cross, fire, faggots, the prison—those fearful arguments to which bigotry had so often resorted—could longer be used;—the body was free—but the mind still worked in chains; it was pent up and stifled, and could not move towards the truth without obstructions that almost crushed it. Men had so fenced religion around with creeds and confessions of faith that it could not be approached freely. Legal persecutions had indeed ceased, but those quite as intolerable followed the slightest whispers of dissent from established dogmas. Not death, but that which the generous mind scarcely prefers to death—the censures and excommunications of ecclesiastical bodies—the blackening of a good name and the blighting of fair prospects—the altered tone and averted eye of former friends—constant vexations in social and domestic life,—these were the penalties paid for the love and earnest pursuit of truth. And the venerable man who lies

before us, ever regarded the use of these in checking or intimidating the human mind, as an enormous imposition. He could not abide the intolerance which interferes with the soul's anxious inquiries after truth and duty. Nothing moved him so much. He esteemed civil liberty but a name, while the mind was not left free. He thought the social blessings enjoyed among us of but little avail, while this system of mental slavery existed, and he was ready to consecrate his life to its removal. In this cause he counted no sacrifice a hardship, and was willing to labor early and late, and with a zeal and perseverance which could not fail to be crowned with success. Nor did they. Blessed beyond most reformers, he lived to witness the fruits of his labors.* They are before the eyes of the present generation; and they will be acknowledged by a grateful posterity. If there is now a shadow of Christian liberty in our own fair New England; if the different sects among us have learned and are learning more and more to respect each other; if the time shall come, as we trust it will, when they will strive together to promote the improvement and happiness of mankind, to build up and adorn the Church universal—for that we are indebted, in no small degree, to the late Dr. Bancroft, and the venerable men who were associated with him in the great contest for religious liberty.

That you may appreciate his character and labors, let us trace such facts in his history as have been preserved, and are known to me. His life was not eventful—theirs are not generally so who have done the best service to mankind. He was born in Reading, Mass., Nov. 10, 1755, and would, therefore, had he reached the approaching autumn,

* See Note B.

have arrived at the advanced age of eighty-four years. He belonged to that class in society from which New England has received many of her noblest and best men.* His father was a farmer, and, as he has been represented, was a man of a strong and original mind whose conversations and modes of thinking had much influence in producing those habits of manliness, activity, and free inquiry for which the son was afterwards distinguished. His early youth was spent in the genial and healthful labors of the field; but when the hour arrived for him to select his profession, with a respect for learning which belongs to the yeomanry of no other country, but which is almost universal in this, at his own solicitation, he was "released from the furrow, and sent out at no small personal sacrifice to be fitted for the husbandry of the Church, or the honorable toils of the state."

Having been prepared for college at the grammar school, and, during its temporary suspension, under the instruction of the clergyman in his native town, he entered at Cambridge, and was graduated in 1778. He was of the class of which that eminent jurist, Nathan Dane, and the historian of Massachusetts, Judge Minot, were distinguished members. He survived all the companions of his early studies but two, of whom one remains with us to this day, to call to mind the forms full of young life, that were around him when he began his career, and to witness the unsparing havoc which death has made among them. Let it be remembered, however, that only a very imperfect education could then be obtained at the best institution in New England. It was at the commencement of the revolutionary contest. The

* See Note C.

peaceful shades of Cambridge were disturbed by the din of war. The halls of the college were converted into barracks for soldiers, and the midnight study was exchanged for the watch of the armed sentinel. The exercises of the pupils were for long periods interrupted, and their education was consequently very incomplete. You may be surprised to learn this when you call to mind the general good scholarship of my venerable associate. His information on most subjects was exact. His knowledge of history, especially that of our own country, was extensive, and in his chosen profession he was unrivalled. He was at one period familiar with the classics, retained an acquaintance with them to an advanced period of his life, and readily quoted his favorite authors. He is represented by his cotemporaries to have been, while at college, regular and studious in his habits—and to have done all in his power to obviate the disadvantages with which his collegiate course was attended. Still he placed the standard of excellence so high that he ever spoke of his early education as very imperfect and subjecting him, through life, to great inconvenience. Though he had nothing with which to reproach himself, his feeling on this subject was scarcely less strong than that expressed by Walter Scott in his biography, when he says, “It is with the deepest regret that I recollect in manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth. Through every part of my literary career I have felt pinched and cramped by my own ignorance, and I would, at this moment, give half the reputation I have had the good fortune to acquire, if, by so doing, I could rest the remaining part on the foundation of learning and science.” Let the youthful student beware how he neglects his golden oppor-

mutual ed.

tunities. If he has not sown in spring, and watched and tilled through summer's suns, let him not expect to reap in autumn.

After having graduated, the Subject of this discourse was engaged for a short period in teaching the public school in Cambridge. He pursued a short course in theology with Rev. Mr. Haven,* the clergyman of his native town, and was licensed to preach in the autumn of the year 1779; and early in the next spring, against the advice of his clerical friends, he went on a mission of three years into Nova Scotia. This he ever regarded as an important era in his life. It gave a hue and coloring to his whole future character and course. The Province, at this period, was the scene of the wildest religious extravagance. In the unsettled state of the country, with few advantages for education, and no established ministry, the flames of fanaticism were sweeping over it; ignorance sat in the chair of instruction; and every form of excess grew without rebuke, and was excited and encouraged without restraint. Into the midst of these evils—the hoarse voices of bigotry groaning and screeching around him—he was thrown, alone, inexperienced, without advisers, without books. It was a scene in which he was compelled to be vigilant, and to act with vigor and decision; and he had nothing but the resources of his own mind with which to settle the doubts and answer the inquiries of the anxious, to check the excesses of the extravagant, and to kindle anew the smothered flames of sincere and manly devotion. And he always regarded it as a school of religious wisdom. It brought out the strength and energy of his character. It gave him that quickness of apprehension, that promptness of decision, that firmness

* See Note D.

of purpose, that untiring perseverance for which he was afterwards distinguished. And, may we not add—it gave him that early attachment to rational religion, and that unconquerable aversion to mysticism, intolerance, and bigotry, of which he afforded frequent manifestations, and which continued to the last.

On his return, in 1783, he was invited to supply the pulpit of the church in this town, then vacant in consequence of the sickness of the pastor—the Rev. Mr. Maccarty. The impression which he made was decided ; for, the next year, the pastor being removed by death, he was again invited to preach ; the impression deepened, a large body of intelligent and devoted friends gathered around him, attached no less by his clear and sound views of Christian truth and duty, than by his frank and amiable manners ; and eventually, after several ineffectual attempts to procure his settlement over the town, a second parish was formed, and the first of February, 1786, he was ordained its pastor. And now a field of duty opened before him, in some respects, new, and in all respects, demanding the utmost prudence, discretion, firmness, self-possession, and devotedness. A new era had arrived in the history of our churches in the interior of New England. A portion of the Christian community had retired from the common body, and built their altar on the other side of Jordan. A new assembly was gathered to worship God in accordance with their views of faith and duty. A church was to be formed, and articles to be framed, and principles to be recognized by which it should be governed, and the great ordinances of religion administered. It was precisely the occasion which a generous mind, excited by an unquenchable thirst for religious liberty, would have craved. It presented it the

rare opportunity of embodying its own best thoughts in the constitution of the new association. And with what a spirit of enlightened liberality, with what a sacred regard to the genius of Christianity, to the rights of conscience, this was done, the records of this church will show to all coming time. Ponder this subject for a moment. Recollect, the views of the society at the period of its formation were decided. They were Arminian. They were the views of Locke, and Whitby, and Grotius—men whose learning gave authority to any opinions which they might adopt. In laying the foundations of a new society, it would have been but natural for its members,—it would have been but in accordance with the common practice, to have embodied these views in the bond of their union, and have made the profession of them, the condition of admission to Christian privileges. They might have set them forth in articles, and have excluded all from the communion and fellowship of the church, who could not subscribe them. But he, whose master mind may be traced in all the earlier transactions of the society, would sooner have been burned at the stake than have infringed a hair's breadth the rights of conscience, and have laid a burthen on his children which they could not bear. He was familiar with ecclesiastical history. He had seen the truth, sunk at one period in the darkness of midnight, gradually rising, like the sun, above surrounding mists, and growing brighter and brighter. Since the Reformation and the revival of letters, he had seen each generation advancing beyond the preceding in Christian knowledge, outgrowing its creeds, and arriving at more clear and enlarged views of truth and duty. He had seen the church agitated and rent; its peace and harmony destroyed

by the endless conflict growing out of the written, established opinions, and the real opinions of its members. He believed it impossible for one generation to prescribe opinions for another, and looked upon all creeds and confessions of faith, wherever and by whomsoever imposed, as obstacles to the soul's freedom, as a snare to the conscience,—signed, they may be, for substance of doctrine, and professed when only half believed, yet leading to the worst sort of slavery, or to the worst sort of prevarication. He believed them inconsistent with the spirit of Protestantism; for, this he regarded as a declaration of religious liberty. He adopted, in his heart, the great maxim that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the creed of Protestants; and, rejecting all others, this he wrote to be the guide of this Christian association:—"We do hereby profess our firm belief of the Holy Scriptures, contained in the Old and New Testaments, and take them as our sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice." Few, and comprehensive words! Penned when and where they were,—at a time and in a community in which creeds and confessions were held in peculiar sanctity,—they indicate a mind singularly jealous of the rights of conscience. Few, and simple words! There let them stand at the head of the doings of this church where he placed them, and let the enlightened principles which they embody, ever regulate its proceedings. None, then, shall accuse us at the bar of God of having thrown a stumbling block in the way of their religious improvement, by debarring them by our creed from the most hallowed rite and dearest privileges of our religion. Whatever defects else may be charged against us, it shall never be said that we have deliberately obstructed the free course of God's truth; or have warred against the sacred rights of the soul.

In the defence of the principles which he thus asserted, our late venerable Pastor was ever ready to engage with the zeal, and ardor, and perseverance becoming a great and good cause. He was their champion in all suitable places. In associations, in conventions, in ecclesiastical councils his voice was raised in their behalf, and he uttered his indignant rebuke at any attempt to violate them. All, which he did in this cause cannot now be known; many records of his labors passed away with the occasions which called them forth. But, of the thirty-six separate publications* which he left behind him, several are an express vindication of religious liberty, and all breathe a free, healthful air which could not have been derived from one whose love of religious freedom was not consistent, ardent, and sincere. In his two principal works,—those on which his permanent reputation will rest,—the *Life of Washington*, published in 1807, and the volume of *Controversial Sermons*, published in 1822, you see the mind and the spirit of the man. In selecting Washington as the subject of his interesting and instructive biography, he seems to have been attracted by a sympathy with the grandeur of his character and his generous sacrifices in the cause of freedom. No one could have so painted the struggles of the chieftain, or have penned the concluding words of that life, whose heart did not throb with a kindred emotion. “Uniting the talents of the soldier (these are the words,) with the qualifications of the statesman, and pursuing, unmoved by difficulties, the noblest end by the purest means, he had the supreme satisfaction of beholding the complete success of his great military and civil services, in the independence and happiness of his country.” The

* See Note E.

volume of sermons, you are aware, contains a full exposition and vindication of the great principles and doctrines of Christianity as he interpreted it. The volume was published at the request of his parishioners, and was warmly welcomed by the religious community, especially that portion which most sympathized in their views with the venerated author. It was highly commended in the leading reviews of the day, and was instrumental in settling many anxious inquirers on the firm basis of religious truth. The encomium of the elder President Adams, in a letter to the author, although familiar to many before me, is too strong and characteristic not to be repeated. "I thank you," he says, "for your kind letter of the 30th December, and above all, for the gift of a precious volume. It is a chain of diamonds, set in links of gold. I have never read nor heard read, a volume of sermons better calculated and adapted to the age and country in which it was written. I have conversed freely with most of the sects in America, and have not been inattentive to the writings and reasonings of all denominations of Christians and philosophers; but after all, I declare to you, that your twenty-nine sermons have expressed the result of all my reasoning, experience, and reflection, in a manner more satisfactory to me, than I could have done in the best days of my strength."* The last publication of Dr. Bancroft, preached three years ago, on the termination of fifty years of his ministry, is consonant with all the rest. It was delivered at a period, and on an occasion, when nothing but the soberness of truth had interest for the mind. It showed an intellect still strong amid the infirmities of the body; that weight of years had not

* See Note F.

abated his interest in the welfare of the community, nor the snows of eighty winters quenched the flames of religious freedom which were early enkindled in his bosom.*

From what has been said, let it not be inferred that he loved strife, or that his preaching was ordinarily of a polemic character. There is no ground for such an inference. He was accustomed to take a wide range in the choice of his subjects, and was unusually happy in bringing out the meaning of the difficult passages of scripture, and in giving lessons of sound and practical duty. He was fervent, strikingly appropriate, and often eloquent in prayer; and none could habitually sit under his ministry, and carry out his suggestions into the life, without acknowledging the general soundness of the preacher, and finding themselves in the path of religious wisdom and improvement.

The circumstances of which we have spoken, in which our venerable friend was placed in the beginning, and through which, from time to time, he passed, did something perhaps to form, certainly afforded occasion for the display of a noble character,—one which it is impossible to regard but with gratitude and affection. At first his position was peculiar. He had assumed new principles, and adopted opinions differing, in some particulars, from the received opinions of the day; and, as it is the world's wont, he was the mark of much bitterness, and the storm of prejudice gathered around him. His ministerial brethren regarded him with coldness and suspicion. He was denied ministerial fellowship and the Christian name. He was talked against, preached against, denounced, and

* See Note G.

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shunned ; and for seven long years pursued his almost solitary way—performing all the duties of his office, warding off calumny, removing misrepresentation, explaining, defending,—subjected, in a word, to every species of petty provocation ; and yet, through this trial, one of the severest to which the human character can be subjected, he passed unscathed. Alike superior to frowns and flatteries, unalarmed by the fears of the timid, unseduced by the confidence of the presumptuous, he calmly and serenely followed his appointed path.* And it was a source of grateful reflection to him to the last, to which he often referred, that in the darkest period of his life, when unkind and bitter things were said, when the storm of calumny poured down upon him, no allegations of a moral nature were ever laid to his charge. A suspicion of reproach never sullied the purity of his character. And this was not because he maintained a cold reserve and practiced habitual concealment. No man was ever more frank and open than he. There was a truthfulness and consistency about him which immediately impressed the mind. His tongue was the index of his heart. There were no subterfuges—no double dealings in him. If, therefore, no charges were ever made against his character, it is because there was no ground for charges ; there was nothing in him which he wished to conceal. Accordingly, he was ever regarded a fair and manly opponent, who scorned to resort to petty artifice, and seize on unworthy measures. While he was true to the friends and the cause which he espoused, he was unalterably fixed in his opposition to the cause which he did not approve. Such sincerity, integrity, and uprightness could not fail to produce their effects.

* See Note H.

His traducers were silenced ; his opposers were won ; and afterwards, in seasons of their perplexity and trial, he became their confidential adviser and friend. And at the period of his death, it may be doubted whether the person lived, who thought of him unkindly, or with any feelings but those of profound respect. I mention this as a noble triumph of the power of moral goodness—most honorable to him, and full of encouragement to all. For, you may be surprised to learn that those traits which disarmed prejudice, and saved him from reproach, were not the gift of nature, but of education ; that he was constitutionally ardent in his temperament, and strong in his passions ; but by self-discipline, he had obtained such entire self-government, that he was never taken off his guard,—could be provoked to commit no indiscretions, and thus give occasion of offence. Who, after this, shall plead the strength of his passions, and the infelicity of his circumstances in extenuation of his follies ?

But, our venerable Friend endured other trials and still harder to bear. It has been the lot of some of the choicest of earth's mould to suffer from poverty and disappointment and straightened circumstances. It was so with him. Soon after his settlement he was married, and one and another was added to his household ; and in a few years a numerous family was gathered around him. And then his income was small, and his expenses were large,—and sickness entered his dwelling ; and he was so harassed and oppressed, that, he assures us, often he “could with difficulty summon sufficient resolution to prosecute his professional labors.” In the last of his printed discourses, he has told the story of his privations and generous sacrifices during

the gloomy period of his early connection with this society ; how he relinquished a portion of his salary when it was scarcely sufficient to procure the necessaries of life, and with what infinite difficulty he collected the pittance that remained.* But he has not told us that during all this period, when he had but a scanty board at home, he supported an aged mother in comfort, always reserved something for works of charity, and sent, from time to time, portions of such as he had to those who were more needy than himself. No personal privation could contract his large and generous heart; and there was not a pulse that did not beat with benevolent emotions. He has told us of the humiliations and straights to which he was driven ;—of his struggles to maintain a decent hospitality. But he has not told us of his domestic bereavements, of the early separation of his children, of his hopes in their expected aid, of their death under circumstances, strange, heart-rending, and full of wo. Nor has he told us of the entire resignation—the fortitude—the cheerfulness—the calm trust in God, with which all this was borne; that while the paternal heart was wrung with anxiety, disappointment, and grief, he maintained his wonted serenity, asking no remission of his labors, locking his sufferings within his own breast, checking no one's joy by the expression of his sorrow. My hearers, there are heroes and martyrs besides those whose names are emblazoned on the pages of history. When the great account shall be made up, I do believe, none will occupy higher thrones, none will wear brighter crowns, than many in the retired and domestic walks of life, who, seeking not the applause of man, taking counsel

* See Note I.

of their own hearts, Enoch-like, walking with God, amid the pressure of duty, amid the floods of sorrow, lift up the tearless eye and exclaim, "my record is on high—I shall not be moved," and press onward to the end. It is time we should understand the value which Christianity attaches to these silent, unobtrusive virtues,—virtues which are the true ornament of human homes and hearts, and which never shone brighter than in him of whose life we have spoken.

And I am the more desirous of leaving the right impression here, for few among us have seen him but in the serene and tranquil evening of his days. The companions of earlier manhood—the witnesses of his struggles in middle life, are gone. One male member of the society, and two females only, who had arrived at maturity at the period of his settlement, survive. He had outlived almost all his earlier friends, and was in the midst of a new generation. We know him only as the venerated man whose form, so often seen in his accustomed walks, had become almost as much associated with the town as its natural objects. We have known him as the much loved father in the ministry—trusted by those who wish well to our institutions—a member of learned and scientific bodies—the presiding officer of many of our literary, religious, and benevolent institutions and associations—respected abroad,—and honored with the highest honors in his profession at home.* We have known him as the cheerful old man whose venerable countenance awed the supercilious, but whose benevolent smile assured the most timid ; as the kind and faithful servant of God, whose image was enshrined in all hearts, who

* See Note K.

seemed to stand on the confines of two worlds, to cheer us in this, and allure us on to a better.

Dr. Bancroft continued in the active discharge of the duties of his profession—occasionally preaching—always ready to lighten the burthen and strengthen the hand of his associate—to whom he ever extended a more than fatherly kindness, and who can never cease to be grateful for his long and intimate connexion with him,—until the last Sabbath of the last January.* He was a few times permitted afterwards to attend public worship in this house, and, doubtless, flattered himself that with the warm sun and healthful breezes of spring he should again revive. But spring came, and then came with it that domestic affliction which is yet fresh in the hearts of many, and which was felt as a public calamity. From the period of Mrs. Bancroft's death† he was seen no more among us. The companion of many years of vicissitude was removed. The strongest tie which bound him to life was severed. He relinquished the expectation of recovery, had no wish to survive, and went to his room to linger and to die. And now, my hearers, I wish it were given me to disclose all that has occurred in that room during the last few months, that you may see with what cheerfulness and composure a Christian can suffer and die. The prayer which our venerable father so often repeated, that he might not survive the possession of his intellectual powers, was granted. God be praised, his mind was clear, and his senses were entire to the last moment. You will bear me witness, many of whom visited him during this period, that death and suffering were shorn of their terrors. You seemed not enter-

* See Note L.

† See Note M.

ing a sick and dying room. Those tones of welcome ; those inquiries after the health and welfare of the absent ; those little courtesies and attentions to the wants of his visitors, continued after the power of utterance was denied him—are not usual with the weak and dying. And, during the whole period, amid many seasons of agony, it is not known that a complaint escaped him. A smile continued to play upon his countenance and he cheerfully acquiesced in his suffering. *PER ARDUA AD ASTRA—By a thorny path we mount to the stars,—Bearing the cross, we gain the crown ;*—this sentiment he quoted on one of my last interviews with him, and on this he acted throughout. And this long period of patient resignation will ever be bright and clear in the recollection of his surviving friends. But there were occasions of more solemn interest. There are incidents and conversations living in their memory, treasured among the best legacies which he has left them. Not that he ever acted or spoke for effect ; he was the last man who would have made a death-bed display of his feelings. And I hope his pure spirit, if it is made acquainted with the transactions of this hour, will not be offended by this reference to scenes which I cannot but feel are among the most solemn and impressive I have known. I have asked one who witnessed, to describe one of them, and I am permitted to quote the words of the writer. It occurred in the earlier part of his sickness, and at the hour of midnight. “To give you an idea of the solemn scene,” says a daughter, “and the reverence and awe which pervaded the mind, as we listened to the deep tones of his voice, would be impossible. You must remember the solemn hour of the night, think of the chamber as lighted by a solitary dim lamp,

see the hoary head laid on the pillow almost in the repose of death ; and, with the feelings of children, watch the fleeting breath of an apparently dying parent. After lying in a sleep of some hours, he suddenly roused, and calling us to his bed-side, spoke of the conviction he felt, that the time was rapidly approaching when he must leave us. ‘I do not pretend,’ said he, ‘to look forward to that solemn moment without emotion. We cannot bid adieu to the scenes and objects we have loved on earth without pain ; and the thought, that we are to appear before the judgment seat of God and account for the deeds done in the body, renders the contemplation of that event awful in the extreme. But I trust in the mercy of God who has promised never to forsake those who put their trust in him. I have studied the Bible to obtain a knowledge of his character, and what he reveals through Jesus our Savior, of the destiny of man. I think I may, without vanity, say, I have endeavored to make the precepts of the gospel the rule of my life and conversation ; and my aim has been to perform the duties assigned me, by my Heavenly Father, to the best of my ability. I have not the presumption to claim the merit of sinless obedience ; but this I do say, my intentions have ever been to conform as far as in my power, to the bright example set before us by our blessed Savior. * * * Death is the portal through which all must pass to reach their home in the Heavens ; and the gospel alone sheds light on its passage. Happy are they who shall sleep in Jesus.’” Yes, servant of God ! happy are they too, who, at such an hour, can bear such a testimony as this. Sweet shall be their sleep—joyous their awaking.

*does
it not*

“ Well done ! well hast thou fought
 The better fight—
 —for this was all thy care,
 To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
 Judged thee perverse.”

At a period still later, also, deep into night, when, as was not unfrequent, he was denied the refreshing balm of sleep—at one of those moments, when the soul, awed by the pervading stillness, feels itself alone with God, he asked the daughter who attended him, to read to him a favorite hymn. It contains the reflections appropriate to an old man. He listened as if the spirit of the song entered his soul ; and, when she came to the words expressive of his own peculiar condition, he exclaimed, *beautiful, elevated, sublime* ; and, with an almost preternatural fervor, repeated them, line by line, as they were read—

“ If piety has marked my steps,
 And love my actions formed,
 And purity possessed my heart,
 And truth my lips adorned ;

 If I’ve grown old in serving Him,
 My Father and my God ;
 I need not fear the closing scene,
 Nor dread the appointed road.”

No, venerable man ! you need not fear, whose life has been consecrated ; who have grown old in the service of your Maker. It is for us to fear, who are bearing the burthen of responsibility and duty ; who are yet engaged in the dark conflict with the world and with sin ; whom trials yet await, whom temptations yet assail. Let it be our prayer, my friends, that we may “ die the death of the righteous, and that our last end may be like his.”

Still more recently he expressed his entire acquiescence in the divine will,—his readiness to go; that no fear, but a calm and settled joy, attended him as the event approached. In this frame he lived, and in this frame he died. He was released from his sufferings on Monday evening, Aug. 19th, at eleven o'clock. The next morning the tidings of his death, quickly circulated through the village, reached me, and, on entering his late dwelling, a scene was presented strikingly impressive. Death had, indeed, been there, but it was death disarmed of all his terrors. There lay the aged saint, his work all done;—and there an infant of a few months, his little grand-child, who had deceased a few hours before;—there they lay—the perfected Christian, the sinless infant,—side by side,—both beautiful in death. And as I gazed on the serene brow of the one and the other, I thought, perchance, they would bear each other company to the upper world. I seemed to see the aged Christian, now clothed in the livery of Heaven, conducting the tender child to the bosom of the lost and loved whom he shall there find, and still engaged in his chosen work, in training the infant spirit for the sublime and everlasting enjoyments above. Of this we are sure, our loss is his gain. A crown of glory awaits him which cannot fade away.

“Why weep ye then for him, who, having won
The bound of man’s appointed years, at last,
Life’s blessings all enjoyed, life’s labors done,
Serenely to his final rest has passed.”

To the bereaved Children, Relatives, and Friends of the deceased—to my ministerial Brethren*—and to my own

* See Note N.

heart, I would offer the rich consolations of our holy religion. We have, indeed, lost a much loved Father, a safe Counsellor, a sincere and long tried Friend. We shall see his face—we shall hear his voice, no more. We must mourn; but let us not mourn as those without hope. He is, indeed, gone from us; but in his ascent to the better world, we may believe his heart is not separated from those he loved. Let us remember the words of Jesus—“If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go to my Father.” He is gone; but, has he not left behind the rich legacy of his life—the memory of his faithful public ministry, of his domestic virtues, of his spotless character? May his mantle fall upon us. May we possess the same fearless love of truth—the same unquenchable desire to approve ourselves to our consciences, our Savior, and our God.

My Parishioners and Friends,* our aged Pastor has ceased from his labors. You will no more behold him in the place which he occupied in this pulpit. Closed are the eyes which never looked on you but with kindness; cold the hand that was never raised here but to bless you; silent the lips that were never opened but to instruct you. After many months absence, you have again followed him to this house of prayer, here to receive from him one more lesson. And were he permitted to address you from the coffin where he lies, what could he teach which he has not taught you again and again, before? Though he were to burst his shroud and rise from the dead, what could he say but bid you “Prepare to meet your God,” “Deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly,” “Live by faith, and not by sight,” “Set your affections on things above and

* See Note O.

not on the earth.” What could he say but repeat the words which he uttered the last time he addressed you—“ Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently.” You have come with him to this place ; but remember, you are to follow him still farther—to yonder silent grove where we are about to deposite him ;* and there, in God’s own time, one by one, you shall assemble—a silent congregation, and, with the companions of his youth, sleep around, while the trees shall wave, and the white monuments shall be reared, and the angels of God shall watch over you. And again once more you will meet, with the multitude whom no man can number—the small and the great—the assembly of all ages and climes. In that great and solemn day, when both ministers and people must give an account, may he be able to present all of you, my friends, who have heard his voice, before the great Head of the church as the crown of his rejoicing.

My Hearers, let us all remember, that “ the fashion of this world passeth away ;” —and, that “ we are but strangers and pilgrims here, as our fathers were before us.” God grant that when this, “ our earthly house shall be dissolved ” and crumble in the dust, “ we may dwell in houses not made with hands,” in the bright mansions of our Father—“ eternal in the Heavens.”

* See Note P.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A. Page 4.

MAYHEW, minister of the West Church in Boston from 1747 to 1766, is undoubtedly to be placed first on the list of the liberal clergy, and of the fearless advocates of religious liberty in New England. He early distinguished himself, and was in later life the companion and bosom friend of Otis, Quincy, and Adams; and shared their councils in all important measures preliminary to the revolutionary contest. The following extract from the Preface of a volume of his Sermons, is characteristic, and will show the spirit of the man. "I must, once for all declare, that I will not be even religiously scolded, nor pitied, nor wept, or lamented out of any opinions which I believe on the authority of Scripture, in the exercise of that small share of reason which God has given me; nor will I postpone this authority to that of all the good fathers of the church, with that of the good mothers added to it." In 1746, he preached as a candidate for the ministry in this town, but on trial, a large majority was found opposed to his settlement. It would be a curious though a vain speculation, to inquire what would have been the result, if thus early, in the very infancy of the town, its character and institutions could have been moulded by one of the most enlightened, exalted, and pure minds of the age. Dr. CHAUNCY, the minister of the First Church in Boston from 1727 to 1787, was the friend and eulogist of Dr. Mayhew. There have been no abler defences of religious liberty written, than his "Seasonable Thoughts," and "Complete View of Episcopacy." Dr. GAY of Hingham, a cotemporary and intimate friend of both Dr. Mayhew and Chauncy, was also an apostle of religious liberty. No man in his times exceeded him in the liberality and generosity of his opinions and practices. He published little, but was distinguished for his literary taste and the brilliancy of his imagination. "The Old Man's Calender,"—a sermon which he preached when he was eighty-five years old, a beautiful and affectionate address, has been justly celebrated.

NOTE B. Page 6.

IN the histories of the revolution which has been made in religious opinions during the last half century, due credit, it is apprehended, has not been rendered him. In the religious periodicals in which there are professedly impartial accounts of the rise of Unitarian Christianity, no acknowledgment is made of his services; he is not so much as mentioned. Whereas, no man did more, or, during his life time, was permitted to see a more remarkable change than it was his privilege to witness in that portion of New England, over which his influence particularly extended. Dr. FREEMAN has been generally regarded as the earliest advocate of Unitarianism in this country; but it is not generally known, that when he was refused ordination by his superior clergy on account of the change in his opinions, Dr. Bancroft had already taken his position,—was consulted by him—had consented to assist at his ordination over the Society at King's Chapel, and was prevented only by their dispensing with an ecclesiastical council and adopting lay services. In the cause of Christian liberty he has been second to none. In 1805, and in 1822, his efforts, in the convention of Congregational ministers of Massachusetts, to arrest measures, then proposed, which were deemed an infringement of the rights of conscience, are well remembered by our elder clergy. When, also, in 1816, the attempt was made, “to impose upon individuals and societies of Christians the odious shackles of an ecclesiastical tribunal,” no one sounded louder the notes of alarm, or more earnestly and ably opposed the attempt. A sermon which he preached upon the subject, passed through two editions.

NOTE C. Page 7.

SINCE the text was delivered, I have been permitted to peruse a few brief memoranda of his life, prepared by Dr. BANCROFT in 1826, for the use of his family. In these he speaks of his ancestry. He describes his mother as “a pious and affectionate woman who did every thing for him by her care, precept, and example, that a tender mother, in her situation, could do for a child.” She died, Nov. 1813, *Æt.* 97 years and 9 months. His father, SAMUEL BANCROFT, seems to have been a man of great respectability, who sustained important civil and military offices in his native town, as well as that of deacon of the church to which he belonged. In a sermon which I have before me, preached at his death in the autumn of 1782, he is represented as a

man of "distinguished abilities, of great benevolence and compassion," who exerted a most happy influence upon the character of the town and society. In his family he maintained that decent respect for religion which was the characteristic of his day, performed worship "duly, morn and night," and, on Saturday evenings, some of the good old works on divinity, by which our fathers were edified, were patiently and perseveringly read. On these occasions, his son manifested the early bias of his mind, and began to feel that love for the simple and intelligible in religion, which never forsook him. He says, "The Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism was early taught me. While young, I was, by my father, appointed reader to the family on Saturday evenings, and Willard's Body of Divinity, a large folio, was selected as my book. The Catechism I never understood or loved;—my mind revolted against Willard. I could not assent to the popular creed, and I well remember the throes of my youthful mind when dwelling upon religious subjects."

NOTE D. Page 9.

AMONG the benefactors of Dr. Bancroft's mind, Mr. HAVEN deserves respectful mention. His influence over him was great and was remembered with gratitude. "He was a man of fine intellect, liberal in his sentiments, and a sound, if not a learned theologian. In every sense he was a worthy and good man. I derived much gratification and real improvement from his conversations; but he was poor, and his library was most miserable. His salary in the currency of the day was next to nothing."

NOTE E. Page 13.

THE following list of his publications is taken from Lincoln's History of Worcester—a work of great labor, remarkable for the minuteness of its details and the accuracy of its facts. As this list passed under the eye of Dr. Bancroft, it is believed to be complete.

"1. Sermon at the ordination of Rev. Samuel Shuttlesworth, June 23, 1790, at Windsor, Vt. 2. Sermon before the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, June 11, 1793, at Worcester. 3. Sermon on the execution of Samuel Frost, for murder, July 16, 1793, at Worcester. 4. Sermon at the installation of Rev. Clark Brown, June 20, 1798, at Brimfield. 5. Eulogy on General Washington, Feb. 22, 1800, at

Worcester. 6. Election Sermon, May 27, 1801. 7. Address, on the importance of education, at the opening of a new building at Leicester Academy, July 4, 1806. 8. Life of Gen. Washington, Worcester, 1807. 8vo. pp. 552. Stereotype, Boston, 1826. 2 vols. 12mo. 9. Sermon at the ordination of Rev. Nathan Parker, Sept. 14, 1808, at Portsmouth, N. H. 10. Sermon before Society for promotion of Christian knowledge, piety and charity, May 29, 1810, at Boston. 11. New Year's Sermon, Jan. 6, 1811. 12. Nature and worth of Christian Liberty, sermon, June 28, 1816, at Worcester, with an appendix, containing the history of Consociation; 2 editions. 13. Duties of the Fourth Commandment, sermon, Jan. 1817, at Worcester; 2 editions. 14. Vindication of the result of a mutual council at Princeton, March, 1817. 15. Discourse on Conversion, April, 1818. 16. The Leaf an emblem of Human Life, sermon on the death of Mrs. Mary Thomas, Nov. 22, 1818. 17. The Doctrine of Immortality, Christmas sermon, 1818. 18. Sermon at the installation of Rev. Luther Wilson, June 23, 1819, at Petersham. 19. Sermon before the Convention of Congregational Ministers, June 1, 1820. 20. Sermons on the Doctrines of the Gospel, Worcester, 1822, 8vo. pp. 429. 21. Mediation and ministry of Jesus Christ, sermon, Aug. 15, 1819, at Keene, N. H. 22. Moral purpose of Ancient Sacrifices—of the Mosaic Ritual, and of Christian Observances, sermon, Aug. 15, 1819, at Keene, N. H. 23. Sermon at the installation of Rev. Andrew Bigelow, July 9, 1823, at Medford. 24. Duties of Parents, sermon, Aug. 10, 1823, at Worcester. 25. Sermon before the Auxiliary Society for meliorating the condition of the Jews, April, 23, 1824, at Worcester. 26. Sermon at the funeral of Rev. Dr. Joseph Sumner, Dec. 30, 1824. 27. Sermon on the death of Pres. John Adams, July 19, 1826. 28. Sermon on the Sabbath following the ordination of Rev. Alonzo Hill, April 8, 1827. 29. Sermon at the dedication of the new Unitarian Meeting House, Aug. 20, 1829. 30-1-2. Sermons in Liberal Preacher: Office of Reason in the Concerns of Religion, July, 1827. Female Duties and Trials, August, 1828. Importance of Salvation, August, 1830. 33. End of the Commandments, sermon in Christian Monitor. 34. A glance at the past and present state of ecclesiastical affairs in Massachusetts, in Unitarian Advocate, Jan. 1831. 35. Moral Power of Christianity, in Western Messenger, i. 350. 36. Sermon on the termination of fifty years of his ministry, Jan. 31, 1836.

NOTE F. Page 14.

THE Life of Washington was stereotyped and published in Boston, in 1826, as one of the series of Bedlington's Cabinet Library. The Sermons were favorably noticed in the Christian Disciple for May, 1822, in the Unitarian Miscellany for January, 1823, published at Baltimore, and in the newspapers of the day. The author received from many individuals assurances of the great satisfaction and comfort which they afforded them. He told me of an instance which gave him

peculiar gratification. On a journey to Canada, he was crossing in a steam-boat, Lake Champlain. As he sat upon the deck, the Captain of the boat, a very respectable Scotchman, learning his name, approached him, and asked if he was the author of the volume of sermons; and begged permission to thank him for the benefit which they had afforded him. "For," said he with great emotion, "I have read and studied them, and they have saved me from infidelity."

NOTE G. Page 15.

HE was no bigot; but his love of liberty was rational as well as ardent. This admits of ample proof. On disputed points of doctrine, he most religiously avoided giving a bias to the minds of his children while they were too young to judge for themselves. One of them, while yet of a tender age, away from home, hearing much discussion respecting the doctrine of future punishment, wrote to him to inquire his views on the subject. Instead of making them known, he sent the three best treatises on the three most prominent theories. Again, one day a daughter, during the hottest of the contest between the Liberal and Orthodox parties, in which he was deeply interested, attracted by the encomiums she had heard, asked leave to read Dr. Channing's Letters to Dr. Worcester:—"And have you read Dr. Worcester's Letters," inquired he? As she answered, no, with some expressions of disparagement—"What," said he, with considerable warmth, "are you a daughter of mine, and do you read only one side of the question?"

NOTE H. Page 16.

If it were asked what was the most prominent trait in him, I think those who knew him most intimately would answer, his moral courage. He was never deterred by his fears from doing what he deemed his duty. Nor was he at all deficient in physical courage. The battle of Lexington occurred during the college vacation. As soon as the tidings of it reached his native place, he seized his musket, and, joining his friends and kinsmen, marched as a volunteer to Cambridge;—but did not arrive until the British were safely entrenched on the hills of Charlestown. Another instance of his personal courage is given:—During the insurrection, when the town was in possession of the army of Shays, the officers took the liberty to billet themselves out upon the inhabitants. It was a period of public anxiety and alarm, and few had the courage to resist the demands, thus made at the head

of armed troops, upon their hospitality. Dr. Bancroft, whose feelings were strongly enlisted against the popular movement, took his measures. He barred the doors of his house and stationed himself without, on the door-step. A file of officers was presently seen riding in the direction of his dwelling—approached and demanded for themselves a shelter for the night. He peremptorily refused, told them he regarded them as rebels, and that they should obtain no entrance into his house except by violence. Impressed by the decision of his tone and manner, they thought it prudent to retire and seek quarters elsewhere.

NOTE I. Page 18.

FROM these remarks let it not be supposed that Dr. Bancroft was neglected by his parishioners. No man ever had warmer and truer friends. No society ever clung to their pastor more devotedly. Had he not been sustained by men firm as adamant, he must have sunk. The truth is, the society was small—the times were embarrassed—and the whole country was poor.

NOTE K. Page 19.

“Dr. Bancroft, was member of the Board of Trustees of Leicester Academy for thirty years, and long its President; President of the Worcester County Bible Society; of the American Unitarian Association from its organization in 1825 to 1836; and of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Piety, and Charity; Vice President of the Worcester and Middlesex Missionary Society, afterward merged in the Evangelical Missionary Society; and of the American Antiquarian Society, from 1816 to 1832; Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and member of other Societies. His long continued and persevering exertions in the cause of education, contributed greatly to the establishment of the improved school system of the town. In 1810 he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard University.”—*Lincoln's History of Worcester*.

NOTE L. Page 20.

THIS was the last time he officiated in his own pulpit. His last public service was at the Hospital, on the second Sunday in February. He preached there both in the morning and afternoon. His interest in

the institution was ardent. "He visited us frequently," says the distinguished Superintendent, "and cheered us with his good wishes and benedictions. He was a most welcome visitor to all our household—so gentle, so kind in his feelings, so benevolent, so cordial in his wishes for the recovery of all who greeted him, that they would flock around him to give their hand and receive his blessing."

NOTE M. Page 20.

SHE died April 27, 1839, *Æt.* 73 years and 11 months,—after an union of more than fifty-two years. She was the mother of thirteen children; six only of whom have outlived her. It was delightful to witness the strong mutual affection of our aged friends, surviving the trials and vicissitudes—the rude blows of more than half a century. We seem to realize the beautiful language of scripture:—"They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." The following extracts from a discourse delivered on the day of her funeral are republished.

MRS. LUCRETIA BANCROFT was the daughter of the late Judge John Chandler, and, at the period of her death, was the sole survivor of a family of seventeen children. With a single exception, she was the last among us of a name that once filled many pages in the history of the town and county—the last of those whose rich patrimony extended over hill and valley around us. In 1786 she was united to my venerable associate, and from that period, her interests, her hopes and wishes were one with the husband of her choice, and the religious society of which he was the Pastor. In all the anxieties and strugglings and sacrifices of its earlier days, she was the sharer of his joys and success—his cheering and soothing companion and efficient helper in moments of darkness and despondency. Although she was born in the lap of plenty and was tenderly and delicately reared, yet we are assured that from the first, without a murmur, she relinquished former habits, and devoted herself unceasingly to the new cares and responsibilities that devolved upon her. Through the long and dreary period when the limited means of this society could afford him but a scanty support, amid sickness and bereavement and much suffering, by her assiduous labors in her domestic relations, by her good management and diligent use of the means in her power, he was enabled to meet the daily wants of his family, sustain the burthen of public duty, and remain connected with this society, whose very existence seemed solely dependent, under God, on his exertions. I use his language, and

I believe it is the truth, when I say, "Rarely has a woman from a family of plenty, so readily conformed to a change of worldly condition, so cheerfully sustained the straitened circumstances of a family, or so perseveringly and effectually labored for its support as she has done."

Nor was this done in the spirit of selfishness. There was no meanness in her devotion. She toiled and economized that others might enjoy. She regarded her home, what home really is, as the sphere of woman's duties and enjoyments. There are her conflicts, and there her noblest triumphs. In the sanctuary of her own dwelling, in rearing and educating a numerous family of children, large portions of her life were spent. But in every portion, her house was the abode of hospitality—of the enlarged and generous hospitality of a former generation. In the spirit of the Apostle she was careful to entertain strangers and was given to hospitality; and when I reflect how generously that of clergymen in former days was taxed, especially in a central place like this,—how many from season to season thronged her dwelling—how incessantly she was called upon to sustain the rites of the Christian family—I cannot but admire the energy which supported her, and the cheerfulness with which she performed a high duty. Whatever sacrifices of time or labor it might cost, night and day, her doors were thrown widely open, and the friend or relative, the stranger or sojourner, found a warm welcome at her fireside and her board.

The same principle which kept the fire always blazing on her hearth, preserved her social affections entire. Most of us have known her only in advanced life, amid the decline and gathering weakness of age. But no moss had grown around her heart. It was young, and fresh, and warm in its sympathies, as if only seventeen instead of seventy years had passed over her. Who of us can forget the kindness which she manifested for the sick, the affectionate interest which she maintained in a large circle of acquaintance, the promptness with which she entered into the feelings of the young, and the ready attachment which she enkindled in their bosoms? Who can forget the constant cheerfulness—the almost youthful buoyancy of spirits, which rendered her abode so pleasant, and drew around her the young and the old?

And if you ask by what principle she was governed?—I answer, it was a religious principle; for none but a religious principle would enable her to be and do what she was and did. And this may be made clear to those who did not know her intimately. I have referred to her cheerfulness—you have all seen it. It arrested even strangers. It shone bright even to the last day of her conscious existence. As

you have listened to her tones and gazed upon her illuminated countenance, and have felt under her influence the cloud of depression and gloom passing away from your own hearts, could you believe that her life had been one of severe trial and bereavement ; that she had endured long seasons of sickness ; that she had wept over the graves of more than half of her household, and that she had buried them under circumstances peculiarly painful ? There may be a natural flow of spirits, and they may flow on in days of ease and prosperity and worldly success, but not amid such trials as she had borne. Such trials would utterly break down and crush the soul that was not stayed on God. They would spread a gloom thicker than midnight along its path, and produce horror and despair from which it could never rise. But she was cheerful ; the world was yet bright ; friends were yet dear, and there were peace and joy within her heart. And what but religious faith and hope could have shed them on the stricken spirit ? In her retirement she walked with God ; and when the storm and the seas roared around her, in her ark she floated in security, and found tranquillity and peace.

But she is gone, and sudden at last was her departure. While we were hoping that she might be spared a little longer, the messenger of death came. She was scarcely conscious that her end was so near. No time was given to bid adieu to husband and friends. No space was allowed her to express her faith and hope in God. In the morning of the day before her decease, she arose as usual, but about noon complained of illness. A physician was sent for, and scarcely had she taken his prescription when she fell into a lethargy. Almost in a moment, that countenance which glowed with animation was covered with paleness, and those eyes that beamed with kindness were closed forever ; that mind, still so clear and active, sunk in darkness ; that heart, warmed with the charities of life, was struck with the chill of death. In a moment, an impassable gulf was placed between her and the inhabitants of earth. One blow was given, and her senses were shut—she entered the dark valley and went to her account. And is it not well ? Could fond affection have desired for her a more peaceful and tranquil departure ? It had received, again and again, the assurances of her affection ; the assurances of her faith and hope ; and what could it desire more ? Her hour came, and there were no agonies, no painful weaknesses, no wanderings of the mind. She laid her down and slept, and has now, we trust, awoken, and dwells with her God.

NOTE N. Page 24.

The following is the copy of a Letter of Condolence addressed by the Worcester Association of Ministers to the family of Dr. Bancroft.

The Worcester Association of Ministers, having been informed of the death of Rev. Dr. BANCROFT, the senior member and presiding officer of the Association, tender to the family of the deceased their respectful and affectionate sympathies on the sorrowful occasion.

It has been our privilege to be intimately associated with this good man, some of us for many years—to listen to his wise and paternal counsels—to witness his Christian conversation—to partake of his hospitality, and to enjoy his friendship. We feel, therefore, that we can and do in some measure appreciate your loss, and share in your sorrows. We mourn with you that the light which has shone so long with undiminished lustre at the domestic altar and fireside in the golden candlestick, and throughout the wide field of his usefulness and his fame, is extinguished. We mourn that we shall no more be welcomed with that benignant smile and friendly grasp with which we have been greeted, whenever and wherever we have met; that we shall no more be instructed, and strengthened, and encouraged by his sound judgment, his fatherly counsels, and his blameless life.

But we feel that you and we have more abundant cause for rejoicing than mourning. We rejoice with you and give thanks to God at the remembrance of his faithful labors—his long and peaceful and prosperous ministry, his literary eminence, his domestic virtues, his honorable and well-spent life.

We shall not forget the happy home over which, together with his excellent consort, he presided with so much ease and dignity and grace—nor the serene and cheerful spirit with which he met the visitations of adversity, and drank the bitter cup. We honored him in life—his memory will ever be precious to our souls—and we rejoice and will rejoice in the blessed hope and assured belief, that it is but the time-worn tabernacle that is dissolved, while the released spirit of our friend has ascended to purer regions, to be forever united with the wise and good of all ages and lands, where, if we remain faithful unto death, we shall again meet, to renew an intercourse and friendship that shall be as enduring as the imperishable soul.

Commending you to the grace of God, and the rich consolations of the gospel, we subscribe ourselves

Yours in the faith and fellowship of Jesus Christ,

NATHANIEL THAYER,	WASHINGTON GILBERT,
ISAAC ALLEN,	CAZNEAU PALFREY,
JOSEPH ALLEN,	SAMUEL MAY,
CALVIN LINCOLN,	RUFUS P. STEBBINS.*

* It is due to the other members of the Association to say, that they were not present at the meeting when this Letter was prepared.

NOTE O. Page 25.

The following is the copy of a vote of the Parish, adopted on the evening of Dr. Bancroft's interment, at an informal but full meeting of its members, and forwarded to his surviving family.

WE, the Members of the Second Congregational Society, of Worcester, having been convened, through the dispensation of Divine Providence, to perform the last offices of respect to the remains of our lamented Senior Pastor, are unwilling to leave the place, where we have so often heard the faithful voice of our departed teacher, without some expression of the feelings with which we contemplate our great bereavement.

The venerated men, who laid the foundations of our society, and with wise discrimination selected our late pastor as their leader, in building up and sustaining the religious community they had formed, are not with us to bear testimony to the faithful manner, in which the work they assigned him, was performed. One by one, with scarcely an exception, they preceded him to the tomb, leaving him at the post of duty, unwearied, performing the work of a Christian minister.

Yet, their uninterrupted peace and harmony, their confidence in the guidance of their pastor, and their affection and respect for him to the close of life, exhibit full evidence of the high esteem in which he was held by those, who knew and felt the difficulties and trials, with which the early years of his ministry were surrounded. And we, their children, and those who from other communities have joined this religious society—now, that the aged servant of God sleeps with his generation; now, that the beloved pastor has followed to the unseen world the flock which in his youth was committed to his charge, are deeply sensible that no common loss has been sustained. We feel that a strong column in our edifice has fallen; that a Christian minister of no ordinary endowments has been removed from us; that a guide who, during more than half a century, through the blessing of God, conducted this society by the still waters of peace, can no longer aid us by his wisdom; that a tried friend, who made our welfare his own, will no longer sympathize with us in the vicissitudes of human life; that a bright example of Christian excellence has been withdrawn from our view. We would cherish the memory of his great worth. We would engrave upon our hearts his wise counsels. We would transmit the knowledge, that there may be an imitation, of his virtues through successive generations of our children.

While occupied with our own sorrows, we forget not those, who, sharing with us an equal loss, mourn also the death of a beloved parent. We tender to the family of our deceased pastor, our heartfelt sympathies. We sympathise with them, also, in the other afflictive dispensations of Providence, with which they have been recently visited. We especially call to mind the sudden death of the lamented partner of our deceased friend. We gratefully remember her kindness and benevolence, and the zeal with which she co-operated with her husband in every effort to promote the welfare of the religious society with which she was connected. Though the relation, which

united us with our late pastor is dissolved, those who were dear to him will be remembered by us with lively interest, and with prayers for their happiness.

NOTE P. Page 26.

ON Thursday, Aug. 22, at 3 o'clock, the remains of Dr. Bancroft were conveyed from his late dwelling to the Unitarian Church, where he had been accustomed to officiate. The Church was hung in black, and filled in every part with a sympathising audience. The services commenced with a Dirge, which was followed by the reading of the Scriptures, and an appropriate Prayer, by Dr. Thayer, of Lancaster. The 485th Hymn of the New York collection was then sung, and the services concluded with the Sermon by the surviving Pastor, and a Funeral Anthem. The remains were then carried to the Rural Cemetery, followed by a long train of mourning parishioners and friends, and were deposited in the beautiful spot, selected some months before, and already occupied by members of his family. The afternoon was clear and tranquil. As the procession retired from the grave, the sun, which had shone calmly and benignantly upon the scene, was just sinking in full-orbed light to his rest, and the whole hemisphere was lighted up, and each cloud tinged, and each object illuminated with the rays of parting glory,—a beautiful emblem of the good man's departure, who, leaving behind the influence of a good life and a bright example, still enlightens the path of the way-fairer and pilgrim, and guides him to his home.

Since Dr. Bancroft's interment, a number of poetical effusions have appeared in the public papers, in memory of the dead. The space remaining will admit the insertion of the two following only, from the *National Ægis*.

L I N E S

Written on the evening of Aug. 22, 1839, to be laid on the grave of the Rev. Dr. Bancroft.

Shine calmly, moonbeams ! on this sacred bed,
Where rests, at last, the aged Christian's head :
Here sleeps no common dust, with honor laid
In saddest silence 'neath the wild wood's shade ;
But tried—oh ! fully tried—and brightly pure
The soul that did its bondage long endure !
Clear mind—kind heart—to God all humbly given
Wove the strong wings which bore that soul to Heaven.

Hush'd is the anthem's mournful swell—and hush'd
The voice that spoke his worth—while silent gush'd
Tears in the crowded house of God ! Yon bell
I hear no longer with its solemn knell ;

The tread of many a mourner's foot hath pass'd
 And Loneliness her seat resumes at last,
 'Mid dropping dews and cold sepulchral urns,
 Till in the golden east the red sun burns.

Then, as with pilgrim foot, the good shall come,
 Some, with sad filial tears, with musings some,
 Where lie his reverend locks, all still and low,
 And thus the current of deep thought shall flow ;
 ' Oh, noble relic of a passing race !
 New England's aged pastors ! though we trace
 On time-enduring marble thy dear name,
 A holier tribute still, thy virtues claim.'

' Wedded—baptiz'd—or taught, at least, by thee,
 Lo ! in our lives, thy monument shall be,
 So that from yonder skies thy mild regard
 May claim and win us yet, thy toil's reward !
 Just—patient—gentle—holy in our ways,
 Could we but copy what we love and praise,
 Then, parted Saint, like thee, we should not shrink
 From sorrow, pain, lone age, or *this* dark brink !

' What though the spark ethereal in *our* clay
 Be of an humbler fire—a fainter ray ?
 God will the diff'rence mark, and suit the task.
 Love-chastened as thou wert, *thy* powers might ask
 A fiercer conflict and a longer race,
 Strengthening and brightening still before man's face,
 Till in thy holy inward power and light,
 Thy finished glory kindled in our sight !'

L I N E S

Suggested by the Death of Rev. Dr. Bancroft.

The old man is at rest ; the full ripe ear
 Is gathered to the granary of God.
 The noble relic of the olden time,
 Beneath the weight of years, has sunk at last.
 The shepherd, silver-haired and reverend,
 Has gone to meet the flock of his first love,
 By heaven's still waters and its pastures green—
 The spirits ' father land.' The living link

Which bound this generation to the last,
 Lies broken in that old man's new made grave.
 That manly heart, which sorrows of long years
 And lingering frosts of age could never chill ;
 That calm, clear eye, that mirrored to the last
 The light of heaven ; that earnest, fearless voice
 To which our fathers lent a reverent ear,
 Which fell upon our own as the deep tones
 Of some old oracle ; and that strong mind
 That poured new light upon the word of God,
 Which based its faith upon the adamant,
 And reared its structure from the living rock,
 Are ours no more.

And yet we shed no tears :—
 The work which God gave him to do, was done ;
 His weary spirit yearned for its repose ;
 The voice of death was music to his ear,—
 An angel's whisper which but called him home.
 That soul illumined by the holy fire
 Upon our earthly altar fanned by him,
 Why should we mourn that it is radiant now
 With that celestial light which from the throne
 Of the eternal pours its dazzling rays ?
 Or that with rapture it hath met again,
 In closer fellowship, the loved on earth,
 And with the wise and good of ages past,
 In heaven made perfect, held communion sweet ?

Calmly the good man sank to his repose ;
 There were few clouds around his setting sun,
 And they were kindled by the golden light
 His sinking orb upon its pathway threw.

Welcome and beautiful art thou, O Death,
 When, in the tranquil evening of his life,
 Thou comest gently to the good man's couch,
 To loose the tie which binds him to the earth,
 And bear his spirit homeward on thy wings.
 Oft is thy form with awful terrors clad ;
 To *him* thou art arrayed in robes of light,
 And in thy face his sinking eye beholds
 An angel's lineaments, and on thy brow
 A seraph's holy smile.

T.

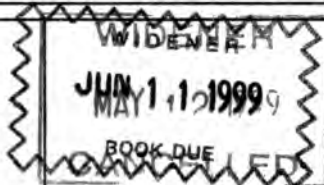


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